

European Youth Coaching Competence Standard (EYCCS)

Youth Coaching Competence Model

A practical guide for youth workers,
social coaches and teachers



Erasmus+



NIVAM
NÁRODNÝ INŠTITÚT VZDELÁVANIA A MLÁDEŽE

Welcome to the world of youth coaching

In a rapidly changing world where young people face unprecedented challenges and opportunities, traditional support approaches often fall short. Young people navigating career paths and life transitions need more than advice or direction, they need empowerment, skills for self-discovery, and tools for ongoing growth.

Recognizing this need, the project *Creating Youth Work Training and Coaching Horizons* (CATCH) was born. This collaborative initiative, funded under the Erasmus+ KA2 Youth program and implemented with the support of NIVAM - Slovak National Agency, brings together a consortium of experienced partners to empower youth workers with essential coaching competencies, advocate for the recognition of youth coaching as a transformative tool for social inclusion, and establish sustainable practices that empower disadvantaged youth to take ownership of their personal and group development: **EduEra** from Slovakia, **Coobra – Cooperativa Braccianti** from Austria, **Oriel** from Italy, **Rescogita OÜ** from Estonia, **Praxis** from Greece, **Zemekoule ZS** from Czech Republic.

The Erasmus+ KA2 Youth program provides the ideal framework for CATCH. As a European Union initiative, Erasmus+ KA2 supports strategic partnerships in the field of youth, fostering innovation, collaboration, and the exchange of good practices. It enables organizations to address shared challenges, enhance the quality of youth work, and develop tools that can be adapted and replicated across diverse contexts. Within this framework, CATCH aims to bridge the gap between coaching methodologies and youth work practices, making a tangible difference in the lives of young people and the educators who support them.

Through international training courses, local implementation, research, and collaborative development, CATCH has created a comprehensive framework for youth coaching practice that meets the unique needs of young people in transition—particularly those from marginalized backgrounds.

CATCH represents a comprehensive, innovative approach to youth coaching and empowerment. By bridging the gap between coaching methodologies and youth work, the project addresses systemic barriers, fosters inclusion, and creates sustainable pathways for personal and professional growth. Through collaboration, creativity, and commitment, CATCH is setting a new standard for youth work, ensuring that no young person is left behind.

We invite you now to turn the page and begin your journey into the world of youth coaching, a journey that has the potential to transform not only your professional practice but the lives of the young people you support.

Acknowledgements

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How to Use This Document

This manual was created for people who work with young people and want to support them in a more thoughtful, empowering, and coaching-based way. It is for youth workers, teachers, social coaches, trainers, mentors, and other professionals who often find themselves in conversations where a young person does not simply need advice or instruction, but space to think, reflect, and find their own direction.

You do not need to be a professional coach to use this document. In fact, it was written especially for people who are already working with young people in everyday practice and want to strengthen how they do it. Maybe you want to listen better. Maybe you want to ask better questions. Maybe you want to build more trust, support more ownership, or feel clearer about your role and boundaries. This manual is here to help with exactly that.

You can use it:

- **individually**, as a self-reflection and self-assessment tool
- **with a colleague or supervisor**, as a basis for reflection, feedback, and professional development
- **in a team**, to discuss shared practice and strengthen a coaching culture
- **in training**, as a guide for learning, discussion, and follow-up practice

Working with young people is meaningful, but it is also complex. There are moments when you want to help, but you are not sure whether helping means stepping in, stepping back, listening more, or guiding more clearly. There are times when a young person seems resistant, withdrawn, overwhelmed, or stuck, and you know that giving advice is not enough. There are also moments when you realise that what makes the biggest difference is not having the perfect answer, but knowing how to create the kind of space where a young person can feel safe, think honestly, and begin to move forward. This manual was designed for those moments.

It offers a practical way to understand what a coaching approach in youth work and education actually looks like. It helps you name the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support good practice, and it gives you a structure for reflecting on what you already do well and what you may want to develop further. It is not a test, and it is not a formal qualification tool. You are not supposed to “pass” it. It is much more like a companion for practice: something you can return to, think with, discuss with others, and use as a guide for your own professional growth.

You also do not need to read the whole manual from beginning to end in one sitting. You can work with it slowly and practically. You might start with one competence area that feels especially relevant right now. You might use the reflective questions after a difficult conversation with a young person. You might take it into supervision, peer reflection, or a team meeting and use it as a starting point for discussion. You might simply read it with a pencil in your hand, noticing where you think, “yes, this is already part of my practice,” and where you think, “this is something I want to get better at.” That is exactly what it is for.

At its heart, this document is based on a simple idea: young people grow best in relationships and environments where they feel heard, respected, safe, and involved in their own process. A coaching approach helps create those conditions. It can strengthen trust, reflection, motivation, responsibility, and agency. For professionals, it can also bring more clarity, deeper listening, better boundaries, and a stronger sense of intention in everyday work.

So use this manual as a companion for practice. Write in it. Pause over the questions. Try out the tools. Return to it after real experiences. Let it confirm what you are already doing well, and gently challenge you where you are still developing. You do not need to master everything at once. What matters is that you stay open, reflective, and willing to take the next step. Because when we grow in the way we support young people, we also widen the space in which they can grow themselves.

How Each Area Is Structured

Each competence area follows the same structure, so that the manual feels easy to navigate and practical to use. The intention is not only to describe the competences, but also to help you connect them to real situations, reflect on them honestly, and think about how they can develop in your everyday work.

In each area, you will find a short introduction that explains what the area is about and why it matters. You will then see the **core competences**, which name the key abilities involved in that dimension of practice. These are followed by **indicators** organised into knowledge, skills, and attitudes, so that you can see more clearly what the competence looks like in action. So that you can pause, consider your own experience, and decide where you are right now.

Each section also includes an **evaluation standard**, which gives a brief sense of what success in that area looks like in practice, and a **focus for development**, which points toward one meaningful direction for further growth. To support reflection, every area includes **reflective questions** and a **self-assessment table**, so that you can pause, consider your own experience, and decide where you are right now.

In the practical toolkit, you will also find concrete methods, short exercises, prompts for reflection, and small actions to try in your work. In this way, the framework is not only something to read, but something to use.

The Six Competence Areas

At the heart of this framework are **six competence areas** that together describe what a strong, thoughtful, and effective coaching approach looks like in work with young people. Each area focuses on a different dimension of practice, but they are closely connected. In real life, these competences do not appear one by one. They work together. The way you build trust affects how a young person listens. The way you listen affects how they reflect. The way you understand systems affects how you support growth. And the way you hold ethics and boundaries shapes the quality of everything else.

For that reason, the six areas should not be seen as separate boxes to tick, but as parts of one wider practice. Together, they offer a practical map of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and relational qualities that help professionals support young people in ways that are respectful, empowering, and meaningful.

Area I – Foundation, Ethics, and Professionalism

This area is about the ground you stand on: your values, your boundaries, your sense of responsibility, and the professional clarity that helps young people feel safe with you.

Area II – Building Safe and Inclusive Relationships

This area focuses on trust, respect, and the creation of a relational space where young people feel able to show up honestly and take part in shaping the process.

Area III – Communication, Active Listening, and Inquiry

This area explores the everyday craft of coaching conversations: listening deeply, asking thoughtful questions, and creating room for reflection rather than rushing toward answers.

Area IV – Facilitating Learning, Growth, and Development

This area is about helping young people recognise their strengths, clarify what matters to them, and take realistic steps forward in their own learning and development.

Area V – Systemic Awareness, Social Inclusion, and Collaborative Engagement

This area widens the lens. It reminds us that young people's lives are shaped not only by personal choices, but also by systems, inequalities, relationships, opportunities, and barriers that need to be understood and navigated.

Area VI – Applying the Principles of Regeneration and Sustainability

This area brings attention to connection, belonging, and the wider world. It invites practitioners to link personal growth with community, environment, and ways of living that support well-being beyond the individual alone.

Together, these six areas create a framework that is both practical and reflective. They are meant to help you better understand your work, better recognize your strengths, and better notice where your next steps in development may lie.



A Note on Supervision and Peer Learning

Coaching is not something we develop alone. It grows through experience, but it also grows through reflection, feedback, and conversations with others. That is why supervision and peer learning matter so much. They help us notice what we might miss on our own, make sense of difficult situations, and continue growing with more awareness and support.

If you have access to formal supervision, this manual can be a very useful companion for that process. You can bring one competence area into supervision, use the reflective questions as a starting point, and identify one concrete area you want to strengthen. If formal supervision is not available to you, this work can still happen in other ways. A trusted colleague, a peer learning pair, or a small reflective group can also offer valuable space for professional growth.

Many of the questions in this manual are designed not only for private reflection, but also for conversation. They work well in team discussions, training follow-up, or peer supervision. Used this way, the manual becomes more than a document to read — it becomes a shared tool for thinking, learning, and developing practice together.

A simple way to use the framework is to choose one competence area each month, read it carefully, reflect on the questions, assess yourself on the scale, and identify one concrete action you want to test in your work. Then, after some practice, come back to it and notice what changed. Small, repeated reflection often leads to deeper and more sustainable growth than trying to change everything at once.



Area I: Foundation, Ethics, and Professionalism

Your bedrock: the non-negotiable foundation
that makes everything else possible.

This area is about the values, principles, and professional mindset that underpin everything else you do as a youth coach. Before you can effectively support a young person, you need to know your own values clearly, understand the ethical responsibilities that come with your role, and be honest about your own assumptions, biases, and limitations. This is not about being perfect — it is about being trustworthy and continually growing.

Core Competencies

- Ethical and Professional Practice — acting with integrity, respecting confidentiality, safeguarding young people, and challenging discrimination.
- Coaching Mindset and Self-Awareness — staying curious and reflective, recognising your own biases, and taking care of yourself so you can sustain your practice.

Indicators

Knowledge

- Deep understanding of ethical standards relevant to your role, including codes of ethics, safeguarding obligations, and data protection (e.g. GDPR).
- Knowledge of youth development theories — understanding how young people grow, think, and form identity.
- Awareness of how power and privilege affect youth-adult relationships — including your own position of authority.
- Familiarity with the role of supervision and reflective practice as tools for professional development.

Skills

- Consistently applying ethical decision-making in your sessions — especially in ambiguous or difficult situations.
- Managing confidentiality appropriately: knowing when to maintain it and knowing when — and how — to involve other adults, while respecting the young person's trust. (This is one of the most common real dilemmas for youth workers and teachers.)
- Challenging discriminatory language or behaviour respectfully and constructively.
- Using supervision or peer consultation to monitor your own blind spots and assumptions.

Recognising when a young person needs specialised support beyond your role — and referring appropriately while staying respectful, clear, and supportive.

Attitudes

- A genuine commitment to personal integrity and accountability.
- Openness to feedback and a lifelong learning mindset — treating ethical practice as something you live, not just a checklist.
- Prioritising self-care as essential to sustaining empathetic, ethical practice. You cannot coach effectively if you are burnt out.
- Respect for diversity and cultural sensitivity in all interactions.

✓ **Evaluation Standard:** Success in this area is measured by your ability to navigate complex ethical situations with honesty and cultural sensitivity, to reflect on your own assumptions regularly, and to maintain the trust of the young people you work with.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Understands the Code of Ethics, safeguarding law, GDPR, and relevant cultural/legal regulations.	Applies ethical decision-making consistently in sessions. Manages confidentiality and knows when to involve others.	Demonstrates integrity, accountability, and transparency. Open to feedback and continuous improvement.
Aware of how bias, power, and privilege affect youth-adult relationships.	Challenges discriminatory language or behaviour respectfully.	Shows equity, social justice, and cultural sensitivity in all interactions.
Knows the role of supervision and reflective practice in professional development.	Uses supervision or peer feedback to identify and address personal biases. Recognises when referral to specialised support is needed.	Balances care for others with personal well-being. Recognises burnout signs.

📍 **Focus for Development:** Bias Awareness. Use supervision or peer conversation to identify the assumptions and triggers you carry about young people from different backgrounds. Ask yourself: What do I assume about young people who are very different from me? Where do those assumptions come from?

Reflective Questions — Ask yourself:

1. What personal experiences or values might affect how I work with young people — positively or as a blind spot?
2. When do I feel most confident in my ethical decision-making? When do I feel uncertain or uncomfortable?
3. How do I handle confidentiality in practice? Can I explain its limits clearly to a young person?
4. How do I currently practice self-care — and is it actually enough to sustain my work?
5. When did I last receive feedback on my practice from a colleague or supervisor? What did I learn?

Self-Assessment — Area I

Level	What it looks like	Where am I? ✓
1 – Awareness	I know this exists but rarely apply it yet.	
2 – Developing	I am beginning to apply this, with some support.	
3 – Applying	I apply this regularly and feel confident.	
4 – Embedding	This is a natural part of my practice; I can guide others.	



Area II: Building Safe and Inclusive Relationships

Creating a safe and inclusive space where young people can be authentically themselves without fear of judgement.

Core Competencies

Building Rapport and Trust — creating a safe, inclusive environment where young people can share freely and be themselves.

Facilitating a Collaborative Coaching Process — working together with young people to co-create goals and agreements that respect their autonomy and reflect their real needs.

Indicators

Knowledge

- Understanding of effective rapport-building strategies, including how to adapt your approach to different personalities, backgrounds, and communication styles.
- Knowledge of how to design coaching agreements that define mutual responsibilities, expectations, and boundaries — rather than just rules the young person must follow.
- Awareness that your role as an adult or professional already creates a power difference. Understanding how to work consciously to reduce it.
- Familiarity with trauma-informed approaches — understanding how adverse experiences can affect how young people engage, communicate, and trust.

Skills

- Rapidly establishing trust in early sessions — especially with young people who are disengaged, resistant, or who have had negative experiences with adults in authority.
- Co-creating coaching agreements that define mutual responsibilities — not just rules the young person has to follow.
- Using trauma-informed language: avoiding pushing for disclosure, normalising reactions, and never responding with shock or judgement.
- Adapting your communication style to different cultural backgrounds — checking your assumptions rather than projecting your own norms.

Attitudes

- Genuine empathy and curiosity about a young person's unique background and lived experience.
- Commitment to sharing power and respecting youth autonomy — involving young people in decisions about their own process.
- Willingness to modify agreements and approaches as needs evolve, based on the young person's feedback.

- ✓ **Evaluation Standard:** Success is measured by high-quality relationships, clear and mutually agreed-upon coaching agreements, and the young person's willingness to engage actively and honestly in the process.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Knows effective rapport-building strategies and how to adapt them to diverse backgrounds.	Rapidly establishes trust in initial sessions. Creates clear, written agreements outlining mutual roles.	Empathy and genuine curiosity about each young person's background and needs.
Knows how to design coaching agreements that balance structure with youth autonomy.	Uses trauma-informed communication strategies. Avoids pushing for disclosure or responding with shock.	Commitment to sharing power. Consistently values and encourages youth input.
Understands that adult/professional roles create a power imbalance, and how to consciously reduce it.	Adapts approach as youth needs evolve. Co-creates ground rules that acknowledge cultural power dynamics.	Flexibility and openness. Willingness to modify agreements based on youth feedback.

- 📍 **Focus for Development:** Contracting Skills. Practice designing coaching agreements as a two-way conversation — what do you each bring, what do you each need, what do you each commit to? Aim for something the young person has genuinely shaped, not just signed.

Reflective Questions – Ask yourself:

1. How quickly do I tend to move to problem-solving rather than staying with relationship-building?
2. How do I adapt my communication style to young people from different cultures or backgrounds?
3. What do young people tell me – directly or indirectly – about feeling safe with me?
4. How do I handle it when a young person is resistant, disengaged, or clearly doesn't want to be there?
5. How do I check whether a young person feels genuinely heard and involved – not just listened to?

Self-Assessment – Area II

Level	What it looks like	Where am I? ✓
1 – Awareness	I know this exists but rarely apply it yet.	
2 – Developing	I am beginning to apply this, with some support.	
3 – Applying	I apply this regularly and feel confident.	
4 – Embedding	This is a natural part of my practice; I can guide others.	



Area III: ✓ Communication, Active Listening, and Inquiry

Your conversational toolkit:
helping young people discover their own insights.

One of the most important shifts in moving from teaching or advising to coaching is learning to ask rather than tell. This area is about developing the communication skills that help young people think more deeply, discover their own answers, and feel genuinely heard. It also includes being aware of how young people communicate differently from adults — and being willing to adapt your style accordingly.

Key principle: Coaching is not advising. Your role is not to provide solutions but to ask questions that help the young person find their own. This is harder than it sounds — especially for teachers, who are trained to give answers.

Core Competencies

Effective Communication and Active Listening — listening deeply, picking up on non-verbal cues, and using open-ended questions to help young people explore their own thoughts. Facilitation of Awareness and Reflection — helping young people gain new insight into themselves and their situations, using questions, silence, and creative tools.

Indicators

Knowledge

- Familiarity with inquiry-based communication models — such as Socratic questioning — which use questions to stimulate thinking rather than delivering information.
- Understanding youth-specific communication patterns: young people may communicate very differently from adults — through tone, body language, silence, or digital means. Being aware of this helps you avoid misreading signals.

Understanding how age and developmental stage shape communication, attention, reflection, and emotional expression — and adapting your pace, language, and questions accordingly.

- Knowledge of creative tools (visual aids, metaphors, storytelling, writing, drawing) that can support reflection for young people who struggle to express themselves verbally.

Skills

- Using open-ended, powerful questions that invite reflection rather than yes/no answers. For example: 'What would change for you if you could do that?' rather than 'Do you want to do that?'
- Paraphrasing and summarising effectively — reflecting back what you hear in a way that makes the young person feel understood.
- Being comfortable with silence. Silence is not empty — it is thinking time. Rushing to fill silence is one of the most common habits to unlearn.
- Integrating creative tools (visual metaphors, images, drawing, movement) when talking does not feel accessible. Adapting pace, language, and questions to the young person's age and developmental stage.

Attitudes

- Open-mindedness: approaching each session without a predetermined agenda about what the young person 'should' do or think.
- Avoiding adult-centric jargon or assumptions about what is 'normal' or 'appropriate'. Following the young person's language and framing.
- Valuing silence and creative expression as legitimate tools — not as signs that the session has broken down.

Quick self-check: How often do I find myself talking more than the young person? If you are talking more than 30% of the time in a coaching session, consider whether you are coaching or advising.

✓ **Evaluation Standard:** Effectiveness is evident when young people express feeling heard and understood, and when shifts in their self-awareness can be linked to the quality of your questions.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Knows inquiry models (e.g. Socratic questioning, use of silence, metaphors).	Uses open-ended questions that invite reflection and self-discovery.	Consistently curious and non-judgmental. Avoids adult-centric jargon.
Understands youth-specific communication patterns, including non-verbal and digital. Adapts communication to age and developmental stage.	Paraphrases and summarises effectively. Client feedback confirms feeling heard.	Comfortable with silence. Willing to adapt approach if talking is not working.
Knows creative tools (visuals, metaphors, drawing) that support reflection.	Uses creative tools when standard conversation is not accessible to the young person.	Values silence and creative expression as legitimate and powerful supports for insight.

 **Focus for Development:** The Use of Silence. Practise staying quiet for a few extra seconds after a young person finishes speaking — resist the urge to immediately respond. This small habit gives young people the space to go deeper. It feels uncomfortable at first, but it is one of the most powerful tools in a coach's repertoire.

Reflective Questions – Ask yourself:
1. In my recent sessions, who was talking more – me or the young person?
2. What kinds of questions do I tend to ask? Are they mostly open or closed?
3. How comfortable am I with silence? What do I do when a conversation goes quiet?
4. How do I adjust my communication for different ages, backgrounds, or communication styles?
5. When did I last offer a creative tool rather than a verbal approach? What happened?

Self-Assessment – Area III

Level	What it looks like	Where am I? ✓
1 – Awareness	I know this exists but rarely apply it yet.	
2 – Developing	I am beginning to apply this, with some support.	
3 – Applying	I apply this regularly and feel confident.	
4 – Embedding	This is a natural part of my practice; I can guide others.	



Area IV: Facilitating Learning, Growth, and Development

Being a catalyst:
helping young people set and pursue their own authentic goals.

This area is about supporting young people to grow in confidence and self-direction — not by telling them what to do, but by helping them clarify what they want, set meaningful goals, and learn from their experiences. Crucially, it requires recognising that identity exploration — a young person figuring out who they are and what they value — is itself a legitimate and important developmental goal, not a detour from 'real work'.

Core Competencies

- Goal-Setting and Action Planning — helping young people set realistic, personally meaningful goals and create concrete steps to pursue them.
- Developmental and Non-Formal Learning Facilitation — using coaching and experiential methods to foster self-direction, resilience, and a stronger sense of identity.

Indicators

Knowledge

- Understanding of developmental psychology — how young people at different ages think about goals, identity, and the future.
- Familiarity with goal-setting frameworks such as SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). Also awareness that good goals should be realistic, personally meaningful, and not harmful to themselves or others.
- Knowledge of non-formal and experiential learning methods — learning through doing, reflecting, and experimenting, not just listening.
- Awareness of the challenges young people commonly face in following through on goals — and how to support without taking over.

Skills

- Co-creating measurable and meaningful goals collaboratively — ensuring the goals belong to the young person, not to you.
- Conducting regular progress reviews and helping young people recalibrate when things change or don't go to plan.
- Using experiential learning strategies — activities, reflection tools, visual goal maps, values exercises — to help young people discover their authentic aspirations.
- Recognising when to step in with support and when to let a young person work through a difficulty on their own — building resilience rather than dependency.

Attitudes

- A belief in the young person's capacity for self-direction. Your job is to unlock it, not substitute for it.
- Celebrating small wins and milestones, not just big outcomes.
- Recognising identity exploration as a valid developmental goal in itself. A young person figuring out who they are is doing important work.
- Patience and flexibility — adapting to each young person's pace and circumstances.

✓ **Evaluation Standard:** Success is measured by observable improvements in the young person's self-confidence, their ability to articulate their own goals, and their active participation in their own growth process.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Knows goal-setting frameworks (e.g. SMART) and understands developmental needs of youth.	Co-creates measurable, meaningful goals with the young person. Goals belong to them, not you.	Celebrates small wins. Believes in each young person's capacity for self-direction.
Understands non-formal and experiential learning methods. Knows common challenges in youth goal follow-through.	Conducts regular progress reviews and helps young people adjust when plans change.	Recognises identity exploration as a valid goal. Patient with each person's pace.
Knows when to step in and when to step back — understanding 'productive struggle'.	Uses experiential tools (visual mapping, values exercises, reflection prompts) effectively.	Flexible and adaptive. Avoids creating dependency — builds young person's own capability.

 **Focus for Development:** Strategic Stepping Back. When a young person is stuck or struggling with a decision, resist the urge to solve it for them. Try asking: 'What would you do if I weren't here?' or 'What do you already know about this situation that might help?' This builds real resilience. A useful rule of thumb: if you find yourself working harder than the young person, something has shifted away from coaching.

Reflective Questions — Ask yourself:

1. How do I help young people distinguish between goals that others have set for them and their own authentic aspirations?
2. Do I celebrate progress, or do I only focus on the final outcome?
3. How do I support a young person when they fail, give up, or change direction?
4. When do I step in with support — and when do I let a young person struggle productively?
5. How do I help young people build on their existing strengths rather than focusing only on what they lack?

Self-Assessment — Area IV

Level	What it looks like	Where am I? ✓
1 – Awareness	I know this exists but rarely apply it yet.	
2 – Developing	I am beginning to apply this, with some support.	
3 – Applying	I apply this regularly and feel confident.	
4 – Embedding	This is a natural part of my practice; I can guide others.	



Area V: Systemic Awareness, Social Inclusion, and Collaborative Engagement

Understanding the bigger picture — helping young people
navigate complex systems.

Young people do not exist in isolation. Their lives are shaped by families, schools, communities, institutions, and broader social forces — including poverty, discrimination, and systemic inequality. This area is about developing your ability to understand those forces, support young people in navigating them, build connections with other professionals and community members, and facilitate group settings effectively.

Key principle: Many barriers young people face are not personal failures — they are systemic. Part of your role as a youth coach is to help young people understand the difference, while building their confidence and skills to navigate the systems that affect them.

Core Competencies

- Cultural and Contextual Competence — understanding the social, cultural, and systemic contexts that shape young people's lives and adapting your practice accordingly.
- Collaboration and Interdisciplinary Engagement — working with families, schools, organisations, and community networks to build support for young people.
- Group and Team Coaching Dynamics — facilitating group settings where every voice is heard and the group's collective wisdom becomes a resource.

Indicators

Knowledge

- Understanding of the broader forces that shape young people's lives: political and policy contexts, economic pressures, social and cultural norms, family systems, and institutional barriers.
- Systems Navigation Literacy: understanding how youth-relevant systems (education, employment, social services, healthcare) actually work — including the 'hidden rules' and informal barriers that often block marginalised young people from access. This is practical knowledge, not just theoretical.
- Knowledge of social capital — understanding the importance of networks and connections, and how some young people have far fewer of these than others, often due to structural inequality.
- Understanding of group dynamics and how to facilitate collective learning — including how groups form, how conflict arises, and how to manage it constructively.

Skills

- Helping young people map the systems and pathways relevant to their goals — including identifying who the key contacts are and rehearsing real interactions (emails, calls, interviews).

Supporting young people to practise self-advocacy in real-life situations — for example writing emails, making calls, preparing for meetings, or asking institutions for information and support.

- Facilitating networking skills with young people who lack connections: introducing them to contacts, building their confidence in reaching out, and supporting them to grow their own networks over time.
- Collaborating effectively with other professionals (teachers, social workers, family members, community organisations) on behalf of young people — while maintaining confidentiality.
- In group settings: ensuring balanced participation, managing conflict constructively, and using creative methods to bring out quieter voices.

Attitudes

- Commitment to social justice and equity — actively challenging bias and advocating for young people when systemic barriers exceed their current capacity to navigate alone.
- Cultural humility: checking your assumptions, asking rather than presuming, and recognising that what is 'normal' in your culture is not universal.
- Empowerment over dependency: your goal is to build the young person's own capacity to navigate systems — not to do it for them indefinitely.
- In groups: championing collective wisdom, crediting peer contributions, and making sure no single voice dominates.

✓ **Evaluation Standard:** Effectiveness is assessed through your ability to integrate broader social contexts into individual coaching, build inclusive environments, and help young people develop real tools for navigating the systems that affect their lives.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Understands the broader forces shaping young people's lives (political, economic, cultural, institutional).	Helps young people map pathways and rehearse real-life system interactions.	Committed to social justice and equity. Actively challenges bias.
Knows the 'hidden rules' of key systems (education, employment) and how they block marginalised youth.	Facilitates networking skills, self-advocacy, and supports young people in building their own connections.	Cultural humility: asks rather than assumes. Reflects on own privilege in supervision.
Understands group dynamics and how to facilitate collective learning.	Ensures balanced participation in groups. Manages conflict constructively. Uses creative methods.	Empowerment focus: builds capacity, avoids dependency. Champions collective wisdom in groups.



Focus for Development: Systems Landscape Literacy. Make a practical list of the key systems and services that affect the young people you work with — education pathways, employment schemes, benefit entitlements, mental health services. For each one, ask: Do I know how this actually works? Who tends to get excluded, and why? Being genuinely useful in this area means knowing the practical details, not just the theory.

Reflective Questions — Ask yourself:

1. How well do I understand the actual systems (education, employment, healthcare) that affect the young people I work with?
2. What are the most common systemic barriers faced by young people in my community?
3. How do I help young people distinguish between personal challenges and structural or systemic barriers?
4. When do I advocate directly for a young person, and when do I support them to advocate for themselves?
5. In group settings, how do I ensure that quieter voices are heard and that dominant voices do not take over?

Self-Assessment — Area V

Level	What it looks like	Where am I? ✓
1 – Awareness	I know this exists but rarely apply it yet.	
2 – Developing	I am beginning to apply this, with some support.	
3 – Applying	I apply this regularly and feel confident.	
4 – Embedding	This is a natural part of my practice; I can guide others.	



Area VI: Applying the Principles of Regeneration and Sustainability

Helping young people see themselves as part of something
larger than themselves.

Young people today are growing up in the context of a global ecological and social crisis. Many experience climate anxiety, a sense of disconnection, or uncertainty about the future. This area is about helping young people feel connected — to their communities, to the natural world, and to a sense of their own positive agency. It also invites you, as a practitioner, to reflect on sustainability in your own practice and values.

The accessible entry point for this area: You do not need to be an expert in ecology or environmental theory. The most important starting point is helping young people move from feeling like passive recipients of services to active contributors to their communities and environments.

Core Competencies

- Community Engagement and Action Planning — helping young people feel part of their community, identify local resources, and take action that benefits both themselves and others.
- Regeneration and Sustainability in Practice — introducing young people to the connection between personal well-being and the health of the natural world, including the use of outdoor and natural settings for reflection.

Indicators

Knowledge

- Understanding of how spending time in natural environments supports mental health and well-being — including reduced anxiety, improved mood, and a greater sense of perspective. This does not require specialist qualifications; it starts with awareness.
- Familiarity with community and social dynamics relevant to your young people's lives — who the key actors are, what resources exist locally, and how to connect young people with them.
- Basic awareness of sustainability frameworks — the idea that our choices should benefit, or at least not harm, ourselves, other people, our communities, and the environment.

Skills

- Co-creating action plans with young people that have a positive impact on their community — not just their individual goals.
- Using outdoor or natural settings (a park, a garden, a walk) as spaces for reflection — not just as a backdrop, but as an intentional part of the coaching process.
- Guiding young people in reflective and sensory activities outdoors that support self-awareness and emotional regulation.
- Supporting young people to identify resources, allies, and opportunities in their immediate environment and community.

Helping young people connect their personal goals with contribution to community and collective well-being.

Attitudes

- A belief that regeneration starts with individual attitudes — that small changes in how we live and relate to our environment can build into something much larger.
- Modelling alignment between your own personal behaviour and ecological and community values.
- A commitment to fostering a sense of belonging — helping young people feel that they matter to their community and that their community matters to them.

✓ **Evaluation Standard:** Success is measured by observable improvements in the young person's sense of well-being and self-awareness, accompanied by a stronger sense of belonging to their community and the natural world around them.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Knows how natural environments positively impact mental health and well-being.	Co-creates action plans that positively impact both client and community.	Believes regeneration starts with individual attitudes. Models ecological values.
Familiar with local community dynamics, resources, and key actors.	Uses outdoor/natural settings intentionally as a reflective coaching space.	Committed to fostering belonging. Helps young people feel they matter and can contribute to collective well-being.
Basic awareness of sustainability — choices should not harm self, others, community, or environment.	Guides sensory/reflective outdoor activities. Supports young people in building local connections.	Supportive and non-directive in nature-based settings. Respects young person's ownership of outcomes.



Focus for Development: Nature-Based Coaching. Start small: try moving one conversation outdoors — a walk in a park, sitting in a garden. Notice what changes in the young person's posture, openness, and language. You do not need a wild landscape; any connection to the natural world counts. Over time, build your comfort with using these settings intentionally rather than just incidentally.

Reflective Questions – Ask yourself:

1. Do the young people I work with feel connected to their community – or isolated from it?
2. What opportunities exist for young people to contribute meaningfully to their local environment or community?
3. How do I address climate anxiety or a sense of helplessness in young people – building agency rather than deepening distress?
4. How comfortable am I with using outdoor or natural spaces in my work? What is one small step I could take?
5. How do I help young people identify the resources and allies that already exist around them?

Self-Assessment – Area VI

Level	What it looks like	Where am I? ✓
1 – Awareness	I know this exists but rarely apply it yet.	
2 – Developing	I am beginning to apply this, with some support.	
3 – Applying	I apply this regularly and feel confident.	
4 – Embedding	This is a natural part of my practice; I can guide others.	

Your Professional Development Summary

Now that you have worked through all six areas, use the space below to map your overall picture — where your strengths lie and where you want to focus your development next.

Competence Area	1 – Awareness	2 – Developing	3 – Applying	4 – Embedding
I. Foundation, Ethics & Professionalism	☐	☐	☐	☐
II. Building Safe & Inclusive Relationships	☐	☐	☐	☐
III. Communication, Listening & Inquiry	☐	☐	☐	☐
IV. Facilitating Learning & Growth	☐	☐	☐	☐
V. Systemic Awareness & Social Inclusion	☐	☐	☐	☐
VI. Regeneration & Sustainability	☐	☐	☐	☐

My two priority areas for development right now:

1. _____
2. _____

One concrete action I will take in the next month:

Who I will reflect on my practice with (supervisor / peer / colleague):

Remember: this self-assessment is a starting point, not a verdict. Revisit it every few months to track your growth — and use it as a conversation starter with a colleague or supervisor. You may be strong in some areas and still developing in others; that is a normal part of professional growth.

Practical Toolkit Area I

This area is the foundation of all your work with young people. Before any method, tool, or coaching question can be useful, there needs to be trust, safety, and professional clarity. This means understanding your role, knowing your limits, staying aware of your own assumptions and reactions, and acting in ways that are ethical, respectful, and sustainable. The goal is not perfection. The goal is to be reflective, trustworthy, and grounded in your practice.

3 practical methods

1. Ethical dilemma reflection

Once a month, take one situation from your practice that felt difficult, unclear, or uncomfortable. Write down what happened, why it felt ethically challenging, what you did, and what you might do differently next time. This helps you build ethical judgment through reflection, not only in moments of crisis.

2. Bias check journal

After a session that triggered a strong reaction in you, pause and reflect. What did you feel? What assumption did you make about the young person? Where might that assumption come from? What do you need in order to stay fair, respectful, and aware? This simple habit can help you notice blind spots before they influence your practice.

3. Supervision or peer case consultation

Bring one real case to a supervisor, colleague, or trusted peer. Talk through questions such as: where are my boundaries here, what is my role, what is not my role, and does this young person need referral or specialist support? Often what feels like “I need to do more” is actually a sign that you need more clarity, not more pressure.

3 tips

Do not wait for a crisis to think about ethics.

Prepare in advance how you explain confidentiality, safeguarding, referral, and your role. These conversations are much easier when you are not already under pressure.

Notice when you are becoming too emotionally involved.

If you find yourself rescuing, overprotecting, thinking about the case constantly, or feeling fully responsible for the outcome, it may be time to pause and review your boundaries.

Build self-care into your routine.

Self-care is not an optional extra. It is part of ethical and sustainable practice. When you are depleted, your patience, judgment, and clarity usually suffer too.

Try this in your next session

Explain confidentiality and its limits in simple, calm language before the conversation becomes deep or personal.

What to observe

Does the young person seem clearer or safer once they understand the boundaries? Do they ask questions? Do you feel confident and steady while explaining it?

Reflect afterwards

What part of that explanation felt natural to you, and what part still needs practice? What would help you make it clearer next time?

Helpful practice / Common mistake

Helpful practice:

"I want you to know what stays between us and what I may need to share if safety becomes a concern. That way, there are no surprises later."

Common mistake:

Avoiding the topic of confidentiality because it feels awkward, and only explaining it once a problem appears.

Warning signs to watch for

- You avoid supervision even when a case feels heavy or confusing.
- You carry cases home emotionally and struggle to switch off.
- You blur the line between support, rescue, and responsibility.
- You stay in situations that need referral because you feel you should manage them alone.

Quick practice check

- Can I explain confidentiality and its limits clearly?
- Do I know when I should refer to specialised support?
- Have I reflected on my assumptions and triggers recently?
- Am I caring for myself in a way that sustains my practice?
- Do I know where my role ends and another professional's role begins?

Discuss with a colleague

- What ethical dilemmas come up most often in our context?
- How do we recognise the point where support should become referral?
- What helps us notice bias in ourselves before it shapes practice?
- Which cases are hardest for us to stay clear and grounded in?

From reflection to action

My strongest point in this area: _____

What I want to improve: _____

One action I will test: _____

Who can support me: _____

When I will review this: _____

Practice task for this month

Ask a colleague to reflect with you on one recent ethical dilemma and identify one boundary or referral point that you want to handle more clearly next time.

One small step I will take this month

Practical Toolkit — Area II

Building Safe and Inclusive Relationships

This area is about creating the kind of space where a young person can begin to breathe, settle, and show up more honestly. Trust is not built through friendliness alone. It grows through clarity, consistency, respect, and shared ownership of the process. A young person is more likely to engage when they feel safe, taken seriously, and able to influence what happens in the space.

3 practical methods

1. Co-create a coaching agreement

At the start of working together, build a simple agreement with the young person instead of giving them a ready-made set of rules. Ask questions such as: what helps you feel safe here, what do you expect from me, what can I expect from you, and what should we do if something feels uncomfortable or unclear? This helps the young person feel that the space belongs to them too.

2. First-session trust questions

Use a few gentle questions early on to understand what helps this person engage. For example: what would make this conversation useful for you, what helps you feel comfortable with an adult, and what usually makes it hard for you to trust? These questions often give you more useful information than staying only on the surface.

3. Relationship check-in

Every few sessions, pause and ask directly about the process. For example: how is this feeling for you, is there anything I do that helps or does not help, and what should we change? This keeps the relationship honest and prevents you from assuming that silence means comfort.

3 tips

Slow down at the beginning.

It can be tempting to move quickly into plans, goals, or solutions. But if the young person does not feel safe with you yet, the work will often stay shallow.

Explain your role clearly.

Many young people are unsure whether you are there to support them, assess them, report them, or fix them. Clear role explanation reduces anxiety and supports trust.

Take resistance seriously, not personally.

Withdrawal, silence, joking, or irritation may be forms of protection. Instead of seeing resistance as disrespect, try asking what it may be protecting.

Try this in your next session

In an early session, ask:

“What would help you feel safe and respected in this space?”

What to observe

Does the young person become more open when you invite their input? Do they seem more relaxed or more willing to engage when they feel they have a say in the process? Reflect afterwards

How much of the agreement was truly co-created, and how much still came only from you? What did you learn about what safety means for this particular young person?

Helpful practice / Common mistake

Helpful practice:

“What would help this space feel useful and safe for you?”

Common mistake:

Talking at length about your rules and expectations without asking what the young person needs in order to engage.

Warning signs to watch for

- You move quickly into advice or problem-solving before trust is built.
- You interpret resistance as disrespect instead of information.
- You assume that because you are being kind, the young person automatically feels safe.

Quick practice check

- Did I explain my role clearly?
- Did I ask what helps this young person feel safe?
- Did we agree how we will work together?
- Did I make space for the young person's input and choice?

Discuss with a colleague

- What helps young people in our context trust adults more quickly?
- How do power differences show up in our relationships with young people?
- What do we do when a young person does not want to be there?

From reflection to action

One thing I already do that builds trust:

One thing I want to change in how I start sessions:

A question I will use more often:

How I will check whether the young person feels safe:

When I will review this:

Practice task for this month

Co-create one simple agreement with a young person instead of explaining only your own rules, then notice what changes in engagement.

One small step I will take this month

Practical Toolkit – Area III

Communication, Active Listening, and Inquiry

This area is about learning to speak less, listen better, and ask questions that help a young person hear themselves more clearly. Coaching is not about having the right answer ready. It is about creating the kind of conversation where reflection becomes possible and new insight has room to emerge.

3 practical methods

1. 70/30 listening practice

In one session, aim to speak no more than around 30% of the time. Afterwards, reflect: did I ask or tell, did I interrupt, and did I leave enough space for thinking? This can feel uncomfortable at first, especially if you are used to teaching, guiding, or advising.

2. Open-question exercise

Take ten typical closed questions you often use and rewrite them into open coaching questions. For example, instead of “Did you like that?” try “What was that experience like for you?” This small shift can change the whole quality of the conversation.

3. Silence training

In conversation, wait five extra seconds after the young person stops speaking. Important thoughts often come after the first pause. Silence is not emptiness; often it is where deeper reflection begins.

3 tips

Do not confuse good questions with many questions.

A young person does not need to feel interviewed. Too many questions can feel like pressure. One well-placed question can do much more than ten rushed ones.

Adapt your language.

Use words, pace, and tone that fit the young person's age, style, and emotional state. Clear human language usually works better than expert language.

Use other forms of expression.

If talking feels difficult, do not force it. Writing, drawing, movement, cards, images, or objects can help a young person express what they cannot yet say directly.

Try this in your next session

Ask one open question and then wait quietly for five seconds before speaking again.

What to observe

Does the young person go further, change direction, or notice something new once you give them more space? Do they seem to think more deeply when you speak less?

Reflect afterwards

What made the silence hard or easy for you? In which moments do you slip back into advising, persuading, or finishing the young person's thoughts?

Helpful practice / Common mistake

Helpful practice:

"What feels most important about this for you right now?"

Common mistake:

Stacking question after question so quickly that the young person has no time to think.

Warning signs to watch for

- You talk more than the young person for most of the session.
- You use mostly closed questions or move quickly into advice.
- You fill every silence because it makes you uncomfortable.

Quick practice check

- Did I ask more than I told?
- Did I use open questions that invited reflection?
- Did I adapt my language to the young person's age and style?
- Did I offer another form of expression when talking was not enough?

Discuss with a colleague

- What kinds of questions create the most insight in our work?
- When do we notice ourselves slipping into teaching, fixing, or persuading?
- How can we use silence and creative methods more confidently?

From reflection to action

One communication habit I want to reduce:

One coaching question I want to practise:

One creative method I can try:

What feedback I will look for from young people:

When I will review this:

Practice task for this month

In your next conversation, ask three open questions before giving any suggestion, and notice how that changes the quality of reflection.

One small step I will take this month

Practical Toolkit — Area IV

Facilitating Learning, Growth, and Development

This area is about helping young people move from vague hopes to meaningful action. Not by pushing them. Not by taking over. But by helping them clarify what matters, notice their strengths, and take steps that feel possible. Growth often looks less like a big breakthrough and more like one honest next step.

3 practical methods

1. Goal ladder

Help the young person break one goal into smaller parts: a long-term goal, the next milestone, one small action this week, one likely obstacle, and one support they can use. This makes goals feel more manageable and less overwhelming.

2. Success and setback reflection

After an experience, ask: what went well, what was hard, what did you learn, and what would you do differently next time? This supports learning from both progress and disappointment.

3. Strengths mapping

Invite the young person to name three strengths they already have, two situations where they used them, and one way to use those strengths in the next step. This shifts attention from what is missing to what is already there.

3 tips

Keep goals owned by the young person.

If the goal matters more to you than to them, it will usually not hold. The young person needs to feel that this is their direction, not your agenda.

Celebrate progress early and often.

Do not wait for the final success. Small wins build confidence, motivation, and a sense that change is possible.

Step back on purpose.

Support does not mean doing the work for them. Sometimes the most useful thing you can do is help them think, then let them try.

Try this in your next session

Choose one goal the young person has mentioned and help them turn it into one realistic next step for this week.

What to observe

Does the goal become clearer, more realistic, or more motivating once it is broken down?
Does the young person seem more engaged when the next step feels manageable?

Reflect afterwards

Were you supporting the young person's ownership, or carrying too much of the process yourself? Did you leave enough room for their thinking and decision-making?

Helpful practice / Common mistake

Helpful practice:

"What is one step that feels realistic for this week?"

Common mistake:

Pushing a young person toward a goal that makes sense to you but does not truly belong to them.

Warning signs to watch for

- You work harder on the goal than the young person does.
- You focus mostly on outcomes and forget to notice learning and progress.
- You step in too quickly and reduce the young person's chance to build resilience.

Quick practice check

- Are the goals clearly the young person's own?
- Did we identify one concrete next step?
- Did I notice strengths as well as problems?
- Did I support reflection after success or setback?

Discuss with a colleague

- How do we tell the difference between support and over-helping?
- What helps young people stay connected to their own goals?
- How can we treat setbacks as learning instead of failure?

From reflection to action

A young person I want to support more effectively in goal-setting:

One tool I will use more often:

How I will celebrate progress:

How I will step back more intentionally:

When I will review this:

Practice task for this month

Help one young person turn a broad goal into one meaningful action for this week and review it together afterwards.

One small step I will take this month

Practical Toolkit — Area V

Systemic Awareness, Social Inclusion, and Collaborative Engagement

This area is about remembering that a young person is never only an individual. Their life is shaped by systems: school, family, services, work, money, rules, expectations, and barriers they did not create. Good coaching in this area means helping young people understand the bigger picture while still strengthening their sense of agency.

3 practical methods

1. System map

With the young person, draw the systems around them: school, family, friends, services, work, community, barriers, and supportive people. Then ask: where do things get stuck, and where are the openings? This often helps reduce shame and increase clarity.

2. Self-advocacy rehearsal

Practise a real-life task before the young person does it: writing an email, making a phone call, preparing for a meeting, asking for help, or explaining their needs. Rehearsal can turn anxiety into something more manageable.

3. Network and opportunity map

Help the young person list people they already know, people they need to connect with, places or organisations that may help, and one next contact to make. This helps make social capital visible and practical.

3 tips

Name systemic barriers clearly.

Help young people see that not everything is their personal failure. Sometimes the system really is difficult, unfair, or confusing.

Know your local systems in practice.

It helps a great deal if you know how schools, services, support schemes, and referral pathways actually work, not only how they are supposed to work on paper.

Build capacity, not dependency.

Do not always speak for the young person if they can practise speaking for themselves. Support them to build confidence step by step.

Try this in your next session

Map one system with a young person this week and identify one real-life interaction they may need to practise next.

What to observe

Does naming the system reduce shame, increase clarity, or help the young person see a possible route forward? Do they feel more stuck, or more able to act?

Reflect afterwards

When do you advocate for the young person, and when do you help them advocate for themselves? Are you strengthening their voice, or replacing it?

Helpful practice / Common mistake

Helpful practice:

"This barrier is not only about you. Let's look at how the system works and what options you have inside it."

Common mistake:

Treating a structural barrier as if it were only a motivation problem or personal weakness.

Warning signs to watch for

- You blame the young person for barriers they do not control.
- You do not know the actual referral routes, eligibility rules, or local support options.
- You speak for the young person so often that they have little chance to build self-advocacy.

Quick practice check

- Do I understand the key systems affecting this young person?
- Have we named both barriers and opportunities?
- Did I help the young person practise one real self-advocacy action?
- In group work, did I make space for quieter voices?

Discuss with a colleague

- What hidden rules most often block young people in our context?
- When do we need to advocate directly, and when should we step back?
- How can we help young people build social capital ethically and realistically?

From reflection to action

One system I need to understand better:

One local contact or resource I should learn more about:

One way I will support self-advocacy:

What I will watch for in group dynamics:

When I will review this:

Practice task for this month

Map one support system around a young person — school, family, services, or community — and rehearse one real interaction they may need to have.

One small step I will take this month

Practical Toolkit — Area VI

Applying the Principles of Regeneration and Sustainability

This area is about helping young people feel connected — not only to goals and problems, but also to place, people, community, and the wider world around them. Sometimes growth begins when a young person no longer feels trapped inside their own stress, but starts to feel part of something larger, more grounded, and more alive.

3 practical methods

1. Outdoor reflective walk

Take one session outside and use prompts such as: what feels alive in your life right now, what feels stuck, and what needs more space to grow? A different setting can open a different kind of reflection.

2. Community contribution exercise

Ask the young person: what matters to you in your community, what bothers you, what small contribution could you make, and who could join you? This can help move from helplessness toward agency.

3. Resource spotting

Invite them to identify resources already around them: places that help them feel calm, people who support them, community spaces, nature spaces, and activities that reconnect them with themselves.

3 tips

Start small

Nature-based or community-based work does not need to be big. A bench, a short walk, a local garden, or one community action is enough.

Connect personal well-being with belonging.

Help young people feel they are part of something larger, not alone with their stress.

Turn eco-anxiety into agency.

Do not stay only with fear or helplessness. Look for small meaningful actions that give the young person a sense of movement and contribution.

Try this in your next session

Move one short conversation outdoors or use one prompt that links personal well-being with community or nature.

What to observe

Does the young person's posture, pace, or openness change when the setting or focus shifts? Do they seem calmer, more reflective, or more connected?

Reflect afterwards

How comfortable are you with using outdoor or community-based elements intentionally rather than only occasionally? What would help you use them more naturally?

Helpful practice / Common mistake

Helpful practice:

"What helps you feel connected — to this place, to other people, or to something bigger than today's stress?"

Common mistake:

Treating sustainability as abstract theory that sits outside everyday youth work.

Warning signs to watch for

- You speak about sustainability only in ideas, not in lived practice or small actions.
- You overlook the role of belonging, place, and environment in young people's well-being.
- You assume nature-based work must be complicated or require a special setting.

Quick practice check

- Did I help the young person notice resources already around them?
- Did we connect personal goals with belonging or contribution?
- Did I use the environment intentionally, even in a small way?
- Did the conversation build agency rather than helplessness?

Discuss with a colleague

- How can we use community and nature-based elements in realistic ways in our context?
- What helps young people move from eco-anxiety toward action and belonging?
- How do we connect personal growth with contribution to others and the environment?

From reflection to action

One small outdoor or community-based step I can take:

One local resource or place I could use more intentionally:

How I will support belonging and contribution:

What I want to learn more about in this area:

When I will review this:

Practice task for this month

Try one short reflective conversation outdoors or one activity that helps a young person notice existing community and environmental resources around them.

One small step I will take this month

Conclusion

Working with young people is never only about methods. It is about relationships, presence, judgment, and the ability to respond with both care and clarity in moments that are often complex, human, and unpredictable. A coaching approach does not give simple answers to that complexity, but it offers something very valuable: a way of working that helps young people feel heard, respected, involved, and more capable of shaping their own path.

This competence model was created to make that approach more visible, practical, and usable. It brings together the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support good youth coaching practice and translates them into a form that professionals can reflect on, learn from, and apply in real life. Its purpose is not to define a perfect practitioner. Its purpose is to support thoughtful practice — practice that is ethical, relational, reflective, and grounded in the real lives of young people.

Across the six competence areas, one message runs through the whole framework: effective support is not about doing more for young people, but about working in ways that help them see more clearly, participate more actively, and grow more confidently. Sometimes that means listening more deeply. Sometimes it means stepping back. Sometimes it means offering structure, asking better questions, noticing strengths, naming barriers, or holding safer boundaries. Often, it means recognising that meaningful support is both personal and relational, and that young people grow best in spaces where they are taken seriously as active participants in their own development.

This manual is also an invitation to professionals. An invitation to slow down and reflect. To notice what already feels strong in your practice. To recognise where you want to grow. To stay open to feedback, curiosity, and learning. No one embodies all of these competences perfectly, and that is not the point. Professional growth is ongoing. It happens through practice, reflection, supervision, conversation, and the willingness to keep learning from experience.

The hope behind this framework is simple: that it helps strengthen the quality of support available to young people. That it helps practitioners feel more confident and intentional in their role. And that it contributes, in small but meaningful ways, to relationships and environments where young people can experience greater trust, agency, belonging, and hope.

So as you finish this manual, do not think of it as something completed and set aside. Think of it as something to return to. A document to work with. A mirror for practice. A guide for reflection. A starting point for conversations with colleagues. A place to notice where you are now, and what your next step may be.

Because when professionals keep growing in the way they support young people, they help create more space for young people to grow too